

**SUNDAY**

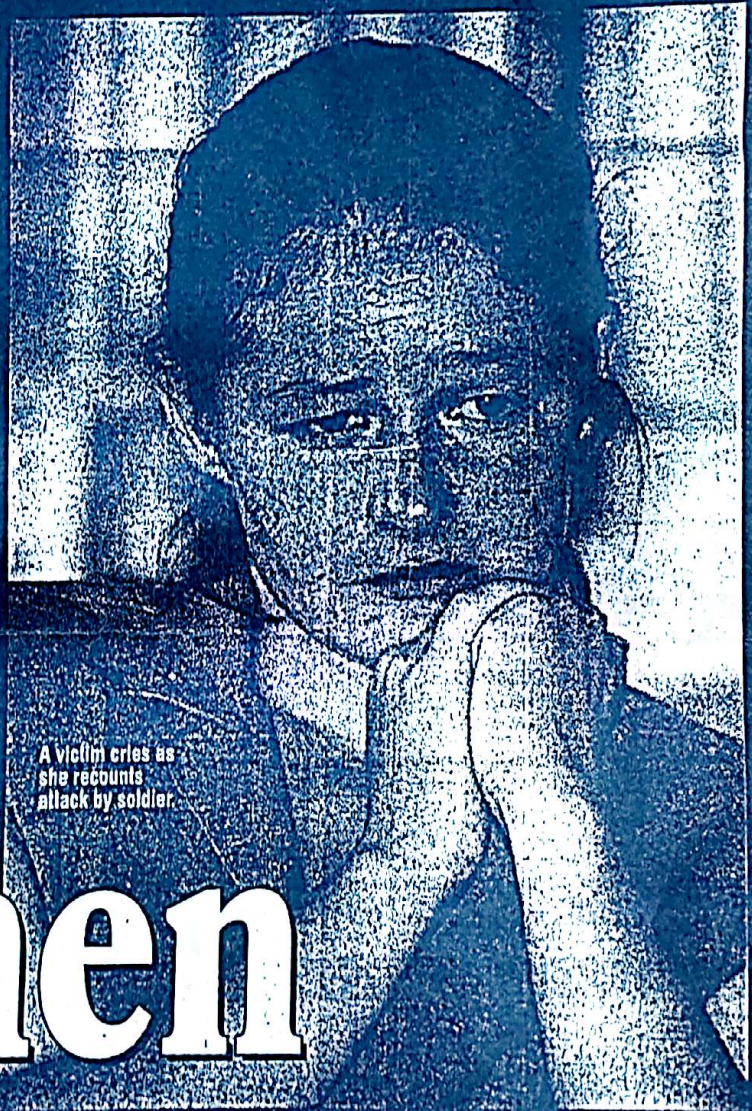
# New York Newsday

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## Bosnia Rape Horror

# The War On Women



A victim cries as  
she recounts  
attack by soldier.

Photo by Andrew Kaler / GAF

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# Rape by Order



Photo by Andree Kalser / G.A.F.F.

**TEARS AND PAIN.** Some of the women who were raped stand in the refugee center in Berzovo Polje, where some tearfully told their stories to a reporter.

## Bosnian Women Terrorized by Serbs

By Roy Gutman  
EUROPE CORRESPONDENT

**S**ERB FORCES IN NORTHERN Bosnia systematically raped 40 young Muslim women of a town they captured early this summer, telling some of their victims they were under orders to do so, the young women say.

Statements by victims of the assault, describing their ordeal in chilling detail, bear out reports that the Serb conquerors of Bosnia have raped Muslim women, not as a byproduct of the war but as a principal tactic of the war.

"We have orders to rape the girls," Mrsada, 23, one of 20 young victims interviewed by New York Newsday, said the young man who abducted her told her. He said he was "ashamed to be a Serb" and added that "everything that is going on is a war crime," she said.

Hafiza, also 23, said she sought to dissuade the soldier who raped her. "I tried crying and begging," she said. "I said, 'You have a mother and a sister, a female in the family.' He said nothing. He didn't want to talk. Then he said 'I must, I must.' I said, 'You must not, if you don't want to.'" But she was unable to stop him.

The incident involved 40 young women from Brezovo Polje, a small town on the Sava River, where conquering forces marched in, seized all the civilians, and dispatched them according to age and gender to their assigned fate.

The rape victims were interviewed in a refugee center, their only refuge after the destruction of their homes, their families and the basis of their economic survival. They agreed to be quoted and photographed, provided they were identified only by first name and age.

"We want the world to know about our truth. All

mothers. All women," said Senada, 17, who wrote a statement by hand and gave it to the chief gynecologist at Tuzla Hospital with the request she pass it on to New York Newsday. "I wouldn't want anyone else to have the same experience. It is worse than any other punishment in the world."

The Brezovo Polje episode is only one of a number of indications of a pattern of systematized rape during the Serb conquest of Bosnia.

In separate interviews in Tuzla, four young women from the village of Liplje, near Zvornik, said their Serb captors had detained them in a makeshift bordello where three or more men raped them every night for 10 nights. A leading Bosnian women's group has charged that upward of 10,000 Bosnian women are currently being held in Serb detention camps where their captors rape them repeatedly, though that has not been independently confirmed. Another pattern is the rape of pregnant women and some middle-aged women.

Dr. Melika Kreitmayer, leader of the gynecological team that examined 25 of the 40 victims from Brezovo Polje, said she and her colleagues are convinced that the object of the rapes was "to humiliate Muslim women, to insult them, to destroy their persons and to cause shock."

"These women were raped not because it was the male instinct. They were raped because it was the goal of the war," she said. "My impression is that someone had an order to rape the girls."

She cited as proof that some young women said they had been taken to a house and not raped, but were instructed to tell others that they had been raped.

Kreitmayer, who is of Muslim origin and whose team

includes a Serb and a Slovene doctor, made those assertions without any sign of objection from her colleagues. "We are shocked by what we have heard," commented her Serb colleague, Dr. Nenad Trifkovic.

According to the young women, the rapists discussed the assaults with their victims as a mission they had to accomplish. Many of the men fortified their resolve by taking white pills, the women said. The men's claim they were operating under orders was reinforced when a new group of irregular forces arrived that owed its allegiance to one of the most savage of the warlords,

Vojislav Seselj, a militant nationalist from Sarajevo. The leaders of the original group tried to protect the women of Brezovo Polje from the Seselj followers, the women indicated.

"Don't worry. The girls have been raped once," Zlata, 23, recalled one of the officers as telling the Seselj followers.

According to the victims, preparations for the mass rape began early on the morning of June 17, when Serb soldiers in army uniforms and masks piled out of their minivans and rounded up the Muslims of Brezovo Polje for "ethnic cleansing."

They loaded the able-bodied men from 18 to 60 onto buses and sent them "for interrogation" to Luka, a notorious, Serb-run detention camp in nearby Brcko, where nine in 10 prisoners were slaughtered, according to a survivor interviewed by New York Newsday.

Then they packed about 1,000 women, children, and old people into eight buses, drove them around the countryside for two days and held them under armed guard for four terrifying nights without food or

Practically every woman from the village of Liplje, a mainly Muslim village of fewer than 500 inhabitants, was raped — many repeatedly — by Serb soldiers. Four victims share their horror. Page 39.

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# Victims Angry, Ashamed

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By Roy Gutman  
EUROPE CORRESPONDENT

Tuzla, Bosnia-Herzegovina — For five nights, Almira Ajanovic says, she was raped by Serb soldiers inside the temporary bordello they had set up in her home village of Liplje, three men every night.

"They took a knife and cut my dress open," the 18-year-old woman said, recalling how it began. The men, paramilitary troops with long beards in the style of Chetniks, the World War II Serb royalists, had stripped to the buff, and two pinned her to the bed as the third raped her. Then they switched places, each watching the others perform.

It continued for five nights, with different men each time, until the sixth, when they heightened the humiliation by raping Almira in front of her father. "That Chetnik said that he was going to marry me. My father kept silent," she recalled.

Afterward the soldiers took her father to the toilet of the house, and hanged him by his neck, legs and hands until a neighbor rescued him 24 hours later.

Almira said she was unable to look him in the face after the incident. "I didn't want to see my father again for one month," she said. "I still cannot talk about this with him."

Liplje, a mainly Muslim village near the city of Zvornik, had fewer than 500 inhabitants. According to Dr. Melika Kreitmayer, the chief of the rape study group at the Tuzla Hospital Gynecological Institute, practically every woman in the village was raped.

The incidents occurred at the end of May while more than 400 of the villagers were held in a large house that Serb forces expropriated from a prominent local Muslim. Most of the rapists were Serb neighbors, but a few were from Serbia, the victims said.

A 57-year-old mother of six appeared at the institute and reported she had been raped twice nightly for 10 days. "She was very desperate when she came in, under psychological pressure so heavy she couldn't live with it," Kreitmayer said.

Both local police officials and the gynecological institute doctors said they are convinced the accounts of rapes in Liplje are true, based on medical examinations, questioning of victims and cross-checking.

Almira and three friends were so angered by what happened to them that they agreed to be identified by full names and ages.

One of their best friends, Nezira Fahrlic, 17, was raped and then strangled to death, they said. Her mother, Hanifa Fahrlic, 50, wrote a statement and gave it to Kreitmayer to be made available to this reporter. "My daughter was strangled. We found her on the couch with her arms at her neck. They raped her and strangled her. It was probably our neighbors [who did it]," she said. "She was very beautiful."

Ziba Hasanovic, 18, said she was taken to the makeshift bordello on the second night of the Serb occupation. "That night I was raped by one man, who took my virginity, and then by three others," she said. After that, "we were then treated as if we were slaves."

Ziba said she spent her days in the bordello kitchen, baking bread. "Only two nights I was not raped," she said, and she knew them by name. "I knew all of them who did it. They were my neighbors," she said.

Jasmina Ferlic, 20, witnessed the murder of her grandfather. "They cut off his ears, then his throat. They threw him behind the house," she said. She was allowed to live at her parents' house but was taken off each night to the bordello.

Like other rape victims, the young women of Liplje believe their lives as future mothers and wives are over. "Everyone who is with us now [other refugees] does not believe we were forced," Sevlata Ajanovic, 18, said. "And they think we are going to go with them [the Serbs] again. We can't imagine marriage as a normal thing."

"I am very ashamed," Jasmina said. "We will be afraid of making love again our whole lives."

Ziba, alone of the four, was in a state of fury. "I am angry. I want revenge," she said.



Photo by Andree Kaiser / G.A.P.F.

These four young women say they were kidnaped and taken to a bordello in Liplje, where they were raped.

## 'We Have Orders to Rape'

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water in a parking lot in the nearby town of Ban Brdo, the victims said. Serb soldiers returning from the front invaded the buses every night and led off women and girls to an unknown location at knife-point, recalled Senada, 17. "They threw them out in the morning, and their clothes were torn, and they were covered with blood," she said.

Finally the group arrived in Caparde, where about 50 Serb irregulars, bearded followers of a warlord named Zeljko Arkan, robbed the mothers and forcibly separated them from their daughters. The mothers were taken by bus and deposited in a war zone. Meanwhile, in the Osnovo furniture warehouse in Caparde, where the daughters were held, the men, mostly with long beards in the style of the World War II Serbian royalist force known as the Chetniks, selected what one of the rapists said were the 40 prettiest young women and raped them in groups of 10.

Hajrira, 21, said she asked Dragan, the man who raped her, why they were doing it. "He said we are the cleanest convoy that passed Caparde, the prettiest and most attractive, and that they wouldn't let us pass because we are so beautiful."

The victims are aged 15 to 30, with careful dress and gentle manners.

"They would come by and tap us on the shoulder," recalled Hejira, 21, another victim. "They told everyone else that we had gone to 'fetch water.' Some of the girls came back two hours later. Some the next morning. And each of them sat down and cried," she said.

The mothers arrived in Tuzla on June 23, distraught about their missing daughters and traumatized by the journey, which began with another bus ride and ended with a forced 12-mile walk through a war zone on a road littered with human corpses.

Their daughters arrived four days later, after a forced walk across a mined road with a number of elderly people of whom died en route, they said.

The young women were exhausted and in a state of shock, doctors said. Most, according to the gynecologi-

cal team that later examined them, had vaginal infections of staphylococcus and other bacteria that originate in dirt or fecal matter.

Almost every one of 20 women interviewed by New York Newsday reported that the men who raped them were filthy and smelly, and, in some cases, bloody.

The health and psychological stresses upon the young women of Brezovo Polje are only part of their tragedy, for each is missing a father or a brother. Few of the women have anywhere to go, and the rapes have shaken their confidence. Almost every one broke into tears as she talked over several days to this reporter.

Their trauma is not over, for as Kreitmayer noted, many of them may become pregnant. The hospital will provide hormonal drugs to induce abortion, she added.

The deepest hurt seems to be moral shame. These women were from the countryside, where premarital sex is prohibited, and Kreitmayer confirmed that all but one had been virgins. Most of them think they have been ruined. "We all feel that we lost everything," said Hejira, 25. "Every woman, if she is raped, has to feel the same."

Satka, 20, said she despised the man who raped her because "he had no feeling for me. I wasn't his girlfriend. It was savagery." She said she felt shame because "I was an honest girl. I was a virgin. I gave it to someone who didn't deserve it. Someone whom I love deserves it. But not a savage."

Meira, 17, said the man who raped her threatened her with a hand grenade. "Mine put a grenade in my hand. He told me 'All Serbs are good, and I am a good Serb.' And if I didn't agree, he could kill both of us with a bomb." Meira said she assumed he was ordered to rape her. He did not apologize "but said that he had had to do it. He said it was better for me that he did it than the followers of Seselj, who would rape 10 men to one woman."

Several pregnant women who were raped were so shattered that they asked to have their babies aborted.

Kreitmayer said one nurse from Brezovo Polje had lost her mother, father, husband, and 4-year-old child "in front of her eyes." The woman told doctors the Serb conquerors decided not to kill her but brought her to their military hospital. "She worked every day for them but every night she was raped. She was sick. She was desperate. She told them she was between two and three months pregnant. But it meant nothing for them," Kreitmayer said.

For the young women of Brezovo Polje, shame alternates with anger. Each time this reporter returned to the school where they are living, a larger group of victims joined in the discussion. Rape has been so rare over the years in Bosnia that there are few professional counselors, and Kreitmayer said this was the first appearance of mass rape and aggression toward women.

The victims say that right now they would like to be anywhere but in Bosnia. Most say that once they leave, they do not plan to return ever again.

## UN's Bosnia Site Shelled; Aid Flights Stop

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina — Mortar rounds shattered windows and blew holes in a parking lot at the UN headquarters yesterday in heavy shelling that forced peacekeepers to stop aid flights briefly.

At least three people were reported killed in the shelling. Heavy machine-gun fire crackled at high-rise apartment buildings nearby. Britain's Press Association, quoting the British Ministry of Defense, said two British soldiers were slightly wounded by

shrapnel while digging a shelter for UN observers.

A report yesterday in Britain's newspaper The Independent said Sarajevo's defenders may have shelled civilians to win sympathy and prompt international military intervention. It cited confidential reports circulating among UN officials.

Kemar Muftic, a spokesman for Bosnia President Alija Izetbegovic, denied the report, but he said there would be an investigation into the sniper killing of a UN peacekeeper.

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